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ABSTRACT

The preceding report provides a limited view of 60 percent of the initial group of students in the Hofstra University Without Walls (UWW) program. Results from the two tests and the Background Questionnaire suggest that these students, in spite of their average age, are not significantly different from the average New College entering freshman in political/social background and intellectual characteristics. They do differ in terms of their life experiences, employment background, apparent social maturity, and reading skills. These conclusions must be viewed extremely cautiously because of the limited sample of UWW students and lack of statistical verification, i.e., the similarities and differences noted are primarily judgmental based upon a review of the above results by the investigators. (Author)

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UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS

STUDENT PROFILE

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INTRODUCTION

The University Without Walls program has developed as an alternative form of higher education for a relatively unique group of students --- intellectually gifted students whose life circumstances prevent their enrolling in conventional educational programs. Major national studies such as the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1971) have specifically recommended that a variety of alternative learning arrangements be made available to these learners. In the past few years, many programs have evolved to satisfy this need, most under the name of University Without Walls. At present there is literally no hard data available on the characteristics of students entering these programs, although such information shoud be forthcoming as these programs get underway. As a part of any evaluation of an educational program, it is important to assess the student as a learner.

Following is a report of results of testing done with12 of the current UWW students at Hofstra University. The purpose of this study was to produce a descriptive profile of UWW students with the expectation that an organized look at the demographic characteristics, opinions and beliefs, abilities and intellectual characteristics of the UWW students would be useful in the development of the program. This latter point is particularly important considering the lack of traditional admissions data which usually serve as the basis for prediction. *Because essentially the same test "package" was administered to all other entering students at New College during the 1973-74 academic year it was also possible to make comparisons between UWW students and entering freshmen at New College.

* It should also be emphasized that this data has been and will bontinue to be reserved for program research and will not be available for use in evaluating individual students.

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Sample

Twelve of the 19 students enrolled in the UWW program at the time of testing participated. The testing session was part of a 4 day on-campus residence period for UWW students in February, 1974.

Instruments

Three instruments were used: 1) The Cooperative English Reading test (frequently referred to as the C-2) as a measure of reading skill and comprehension, 2) the Omnibus Personality Inventory (OPI) as a measure of intellectual orientation and disposition (not achievement), and 3) a specially prepared background questionaire designed to collect demographic and attitude information.

Cooperative Reading Test: This test is a nationally normed reading measure including measures of vocabulary, reading speed and comprehension. A variety of normative groups can be used for interpreting test scores. Because the UWW students are all high school graduates and because most of them have only completed a minimal amount of college course work prior to entering the UWW program, the norm group chosen was "entering freshman at a liberal arts college."

Omnibus Personality Inventory: The OPI is a multiscale, true-false, self-administering personality inventory, developed "...to assess selected attitudes, values, and interests, chiefly relevant in the areas of normal ego-functioning and intellectural activity." (Heist and Yonge, 1968, p.1) Results include fourteen individual scale measures and one composite measure called the "Intellectual Disposition Category". The five scales which comprise the IDC category are said to provide a general measure of intellectual orientation or disposition, specifically denoting whether logical, analytical thinking takes

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precedence over thinking that involves free use of imagination and perceptual-cognitive exploration. Finally, it should be emphasized that the OPI is a measure of intellectual disposition or style, not ability or achievement.

UWW Background Questionaire: This 39 item questionaire was specifically prepared for administration to UWW students by the New College Educational Research Office. It draws heavily on the American College Entrance Questionaire form including some questions from the ACE and modifying others to make them appropriate to the UWW population. Through its use, substantial demographic and historical data were collected and a series of opinion questions provided a sense of the political and social outlooks of the UWW students. Because of the questionaire's similarity to the ACE questionaire, it was possible to draw comparisons with other entering student of New College, e.g. entering freshman. Finally a series of narrative response questions probed how, why, and for what reasons the students enrolled in the program. Obviously there are no published norms for this instrument, although continued use of the instrument with additional groups of UWW students at Hofstra will eventually provide comparative information.

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RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Results of the testing are reported in some detail below. In addition, Table I provides comparative data for the UWW students and entering freshman students at New College during the current academic year. It should be noted that the interpretation of these results is limited by the fact that only 12 of the 19 possible students in the program participated and that only 9 of the 12 OPI scores were interpretable. Therefore, these results are not necessarily indicative of information about, or characteristics of, the total population of UWW students at Hofstra.

Background Questionnaire

The demographic and opinion data are reported in semi-tabular form. Following that the narrative responses are summarized for conciseness.

1. Male/female enrollment — Male = 33% — Female = 67%
2. Age range 27 to 60 years. — Mean age 39 years.
3. 25% were veterans. No female veterans.
4. Distance from the campus ranged from adjacent to approximately 60 miles. Mean distance = 15 miles.
5. Highest academic degree intended to obtain

Bachelor's degree	25%
Master's degree	33%
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	17%
LL.B. or J.D.	8%
B.D. or M.DIV	8%
no reply	8%

6. Prior to this term 17% had taken courses for credit at Hofstra University.
7. Courses taken since leaving high school

Where taken	For Credit	No Credit
No courses taken	17%	8%
Jr. or community college	17%	8%
4 year college or universtiy	42%	25%
Other postsecondary school, etc.	25%	17%

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8. High school graduation years ranged from 1931 to 1966. Mean year of graduation was 1950. One person did not respond, but, did not indicate he had not graduated from high school.

11. Average grade in secondary school. B+ = 33%, B = 17%, B- = 6%, C+ 42%

12. Anticipated time needed to complete current degree. Range 1 to 3 years. Mean 1.9 years.

13. Racial background. White/Caucasian = 50%, Black Afro-American = 42%

14. Marital status. Presently married = 83%, divorced = 8%, no response = 8%

15. Number of children. Range 0-5. Mean = 2.6
Number of children still at home. Range 0-4 Mean = 1.7

16. Highest level of formal education by each relative

Type of Education	Father	Mother	Spouse
Grammar school or less	17%	0%	0%
Some high school	33	17	8
High school graduate	25	50	8
Post secondary but not college	8	0	0
Some college	0	17	8
College degree	8	8	0
Some graduate school	0	8	8
Graduate degree	8	0	50
No response or not applicable			16

17. Estimate of family income. Range $11,000-$40,000+ Mean = $24,700+
No response = 2 people.

18. Political views. Liberal = 67%, Middle-of-the-road = 17%, Conservative = 8%.
No response = 8%. No one listed far-right or far-left.

36. While studying approximately how many hours do you intend to spend on committed activities other than study. Range 25-60 hours. Mean = 40.5
Two could not estimate and one had no response.

37. How much time do you expect to spend studying? Range 7.5 to 37.5 hours. Mean = 23.4 hours per week. One could not estimate and one had no response.

19. Which of the following are important to you in your long-term choice of career occupation? (Mark one in each row.) Percentage based on possibility of 11 responses. One person did not respond at all and some people omitted one or more questions.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Job openings generally available	18%	45%	27%
Rapid career advancement possible ..	36	18	45
High anticipated earnings	18	27	54
Well-respected or prestigious occupation.	18	45	36
Great deal of independance.	36	54	9

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	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Chance for steady progress	36	27	27
Can make an important contribution to society	54	36	9
Can avoid pressure	27	54	18
Can work with ideas	81	0	0
Can be helpful to others	81	18	0
Able to work with people	90	9	0
Intrinsic interest in the field	72	27	0

20. Mark one in each row:	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
The Federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution	67%	33%	0%	0%
The Federal government is not doing enough to control energy resources	75	25	0	0
The Federal government is not doing enough to protect the consumer from faulty goods and services	58	33	8	0
The Federal government is not doing enough to promote school desegration	75	17	8	0
There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals	17	8	33	42
As long as they work hard, people should be paid equally regardless of ability or quality of work	25	17	17	42
The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family	8	8	8	75
Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now	67	25	0	8
Marijuana should be legalized	58	25	8	8
People should be discouraged from having large families	17	50	0	25
Women should receive the same salary and opportunities for advancement as men in comparable positions	100	0	0	0
Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society	8	25	42	25
The chief benefit of a college education is that it increases one's earning power	0	58	25	17
Faculty promotions should be based in part on student evaluations	42	42	8	8

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	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
Grades in college should be abolished.	33	42	17	0
College would be improved if organized sports were de-emphasized.	25	42	25	8
College officials have the right to ban persons with extreme views from speaking on campus.	0	17	8	75
Students from disadvantaged social backgrounds should be given preferential treatment in college admissions.	33	33	17	17
Open admission (admitting anyone who applies should be adopted by all publicly supported colleges).	42	25	33	0
Even if it employs open admissions, a college should use the same performance standards in awarding degrees to all students.	67	17	8	0

22. Indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following:	Essential	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts (acting, drama, etc.) or creating artistic work.	8%	0%	25%	58%
Becoming an authority in my field.	33	8	25	25
Influencing the political structure.	8	33	58	0
Influencing social values.	33	58	0	0
Raising a family.	50	25	8	8
Having administrative responsibility for the work of others.	25	8	17	42
Being financially well off.	17	25	50	0
Helping others who are in difficulty.	42	33	17	0
Being successful in a business of my own	17	0	42	33
Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment.	17	17	33	25
Becoming involved in programs to solve the energy problem	17	8	58	8
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life.	75	8	8	0
Participating in a community action program.	25	33	25	8
Keeping up to date with political affairs.	25	33	33	0

Questions 27 through 30 and Question 33 were concerned with the overt influences which were responsible for the students enrolling in the program and the apprehensions they have about it. Specifically Question 27 asked, "How did you find out about University Without Walls?" Two people found out through the newspaper and seven through personal but non-formal contact. The remaining three learned about the program through personal contact of a more formal nature.

In response to Question 28, a large majority stated that the characteristic of University Without Walls which most appealed to them was the flexibility of the schedule both with regard to time and rate of learning.

There was much less definition and agreement on Question 30 which asked, "What is the least attractive characteristic of University Without Walls?" Half had no reply or indicated they could not yet tell. There was some concern about the lack of structure.

When asked to identify the person most influential in their decision to undertake the program, approximately 75% listed themselves as the most influential person. 25% credited their spouses as most important. Some credit was given to "work" or "needs" even though a person was asked for

Question 29 asked "What factors influenced your decision to come to University Without Walls?" The responses were very specific. While approximately 25% of the replies referred to the flexibility of the program, the replies were very personalized and in concrete rather than abstract terms. The only communality among the responses was the idea that the degree is needed to allow the student to do something else that he wants to do. He has a goal and this program is a way to reach it.

In an attempt to gain insight into their past and anticipated future employment, the interviewees were asked what their job was, for how long

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they had been doing it, did they plan to change jobs shortly, and what did they expect to do within one or two years after graduation.

The employment question divided the group into two parts. Four were engaged in profit oriented businesses and six did volunteer work or worked for private or government agencies involved in personal services on essentially a no profit basis. Two were housewives and considered themselves not to be employed. None of the people were engaged directly in the production of a physical product other than a report or other written output.

Of those employed, two held their positions five or more years, three for three years and the remainder for one-and-one-half years or less. That is, five of the ten who were employed were recent employees. The mean length of employment was 2.8 years. This is substantially below the national norm.

No one indicated they planned to change their job in the near future. In response to Question 38 "What do you expect to do within one or two years after receiving your degree," the following responses were given. More than one response is possible.

Go to graduate school	73%
Go to a professional school	9
Get a job or get a new job	0
Travel	9
Continue present job	45
Something else. Specify	18

We asked what fields of study the students were concerned with, the studies they felt were rewarding and the studies they found most and least attractive. For Question 21, "What field are you planning to study" the response was:

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Number	Percent	Category
15	52	psychology, social work, social law
4	14	education
2	7	humanities
4	14	journalism, communications, public relations
4	14	business administration, personnal administration, industrial psychology, computer science

Questions 34 and 35 asked for the most attractive and least attractive academic courses or fields. The responses are tabulated side by side below and relate closely to question 21. Usually only one response was indicated.

Most Attractive		Least Attractive		Category
%	%	%	%	
8	30	1	5	Psychology, Sociology, political science, social law
3	19	2	10	Education
3	19	3	14	Humanities
1	6	1	5	Journalism
1	6	2	10	Business administration
0	0	9	43	Math, accounting, science
0	0	3	14	none

Question 31 asked "What aspect of your college career do you expect to be the most rewarding?" This question elicited responses which referred to either internal or external occurrances. Examples of internal occurrences are "my personal evaluation of my success," and "the learning process." Examples of external occurences are "being forced to read and being forced to make time for study" and "the research and development of prescribed courses." Approximately 67% of the responses were internal and 33% external references.

Question 37 asked for the sort disturbing or difficult aspect of college. Four people indicated no difficulties or had no response. Most of the responses indicated that developing the discipline necessary to complete the various tasks required in the progress would be the greatest difficulty.

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The last question asked "Why do you want a college degree?" In response, everyone of the interviewees gave specific goals that they were striving for. Some indicated "personal satisfaction" as well as a specific job or activity goal, but, such references as "money," "aid in obtaining higher paying jobs" and "career advancement" were the key themes.

In comparison to entering freshman at New College, the UWW students are quite similar in religious, political and socio-economic backgrounds. In general, the UWW students express the same opinions about matters of social concern such as equality for women and government intervention as do other new students at New College; however, the UWW students are more "radical" in their opinions about the value of grades and other traditional aspects of education. This might logically be expected among this group of students who have selected a program which represents change from traditional forms of education. These results would also tend to belie the "generation gap," at least for this group of adults.

In terms of reasons for career choice, the UWW students express a greater desire for working with and helping others than does the average New College Freshman, although both groups express about equal concern for making a contribution to society. At the same time both groups express equal concern with helping others as a "personal objective" in life. The difference seems to be that UWW students see their careers as the means to accomplishing this objective more than do the regular New College Freshman.

One final note of comparison, the entering New College Freshman appears more likely to consider achieving expertise/authority/accomplishment in his field of choice as more important than do the UWW students. It ma, be that entering freshmen see their education as leading to professional/occupational preparation whereas UWW students may see their undergraduate education as satisfying more general needs and objectives other than job preparation.

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As noted previously, the UWW students generally do not plan to change jobs in the near future, and many intend to go on to professional or graduate schools.

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TABLE 1.
C-2 READING AND OMNIBUS PERSONALITY INVENTORY MEASURES
BY GROUPS FOR FALL 1973 AND SPRING 1974 STUDENTS

TYPE OF MEASUREMENT	FRESHMAN	UWW
C-2 READING LIST		
Summary & Rank	63.8	45.2
Vocabulary	53.0	47.5
Speed of Comprehension	76.4	51.8
Level of Comprehension	43.3	35.3
OMNIBUS PERSONALITY INVENTORY		
Intellectual Disposition Cat.	4.1	4.5
Thinking Introversion	53.9	56.3
Theoretical Orientation	52.9	48.5
Estheticism	53.8	53.1
Complexity	59.0	53.1
Autonomy	58.2	59.6
Religious Orientation	55.5	53.4
Social Extroversion	45.3	50.5
Impulse Expression	58.4	50.0
Personal Integration	47.9	54.7
Anxiety Level	48.2	55.4
Altruism	49.0	54.1
Practical Outlook	41.2	42.3
Masculinity-Femininity	46.0	42.7
Response Bias	48.4	49.9

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C-2 Reading Test

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The results of the C-2 Reading Tests are contained in table 1. For comparative purposes, percentile scores received by entering New College Freshman are also included. As is suggested in the table the summary percentile rank along with the percentile ranks on the three separate measures are below those of entering freshman. A percentile rank of 50 is the expected or mean rank.

Interpretation: The immediate suggestion of these results is that the UWW students are noticeably below the average incoming freshman at New College in reading skills. However, a more detailed examination of the individual scores reveals that five people had a summary percentile score above 50.0 and five had a score of 31.0 or below. The range of percentile scores was from a high of 83.0 to a low of 4.0. The mean, as a statistical measure of central tendency is affected by extreme scores. Using the median (md = 49) as a measure of central tendency (less effected by extreme score), we find that the groups performance is closer to, but still below the average for entering freshman. A further examination of scores suggests that there are really three groups of student scores: first, those students whose overall score is above the 75th percentile (N 2); second, those who score around the 50th percentile (Range 49-56, N 5); and third, those with percentiles at 31 or below (N=5).

In attempting to understand these low scores, it is possible that lack of familiarity with recording of response procedures interfered or possibly invalidated scores. Also, the fact that some UWW students have been away from the "school" environment for a number of years may have led to a decline in this important academic skill. Regardless, the suggestion still remains

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that some students in this group might benefit from assistance in reading skills. This is particularly important, considering the nature of study in the UWW program which emphasizes independent reading and work.

Omnibus Personality Inventory

Results of the OPI are also reported in Table I. Raw scores on each of the fourteen scales are converted to standard scores with a mean of 50.0 and standard deviation of 10. The Intellectual Disposition Category is a composite score. The lower this value the more disposed is the group or individual to pursue intellectual educational goals rather than practical educational goals. The average IDC for any representative sample of American College students would probably fall near category 5 (Heist and Yonge, 1968).

Once again, we see the similarity between the UWW students and entering freshman; in no case do differences exceed 1 standard deviation and the differences between this sample and the normative sample also do not exceed one standard deviation. In general, these UWW students do not appear to differ markedly from typical college students, as a group. However, some general descriptive statements about the UWW students might be derived from these scores. In general, the UWW students express a preference for reflective thought and an interest in a broad range of ideas and areas (Thinking Introversion); similarly, they express a preference for flexibility and novelty (Complexity scale) and are less concerned with practical application or concrete accomplishments (Practical Outlook). As a group they appear to be sensitive to esthetic stimulation (Estheticism) and admit to having stronger esthetic and social inclinations (Masculinity-Femininity). These results are consistent with expressed interests in social service fields and the humanities as opposed do scientific and business interests as indicated

in response to the Background Questionnaire. Compared to incoming freshman at New College, the UWM students express a greater interest in being with people and seeking satisfaction through social relationships (Social Extroversion); similarly, they present themselves as less anxious and less socially alienated than the average New College Freshman (Anxiety Level and Personal Integration).

The above interpretations must be viewed cautiously because of the limited sample size and recongnizing that considerable individual variation may exist. Also, since none of the group means are greater than one standard deviation from the mean for college students these patterns are only suggestive and not definitive or conclusive.

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SUMMARY

The preceding report provides a limited view of 60% of the initial group of students in the Hofstra UWW program. Results from the two tests and the Background Questionnaire suggest that these students, in spite of their average age, are not significantly different from the average New College entering freshman in political/social background and intellectual characteristics. They do differ in terms of their life experiences, employment background, apparent social maturity, and reading skills. These conclusions must be viewed extremely cautiously because of the limited sample of UWW students and lack of statistical verification, i.e., the similarities and differences noted are primarily judgemental based upon a review of the above results by the investigators.

Additional data will be collected on new students as they enter the program and this data will be correlated with performance and success in the program with the goal of developing a predictive model as part of an overall evaluation of the UWW program at Hofstra. At the same time, this information can be valuable in comparing the student body of the Hofstra Program with other UWW Units across the country.

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